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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	EEB-00	AID-00	A-00	ACQ-00	INL-00	DOT-00
	PERC-00	DS-00	DHSE-00	EUR-00	OIGO-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00
	VCI-00	OBO-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00
	MOFM-00	MOF-00	VCIE-00	DCP-00	NSAE-00	ISN-00	OIG-00
	OMB-00	NIMA-00	PA-00	PM-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	P-00
	ISNE-00	DOHS-00	FMPC-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	T-00	NCTC-00	IIP-00	SCRS-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00
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FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0755
INFO IGAD COLLECTIVE
SOMALIA COLLECTIVE
DIA WASHINGTON DC
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
CJTF HOA
CIA WASHINGTON DC
SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 001101

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/FO, AF/E, AF/RSA, AND PM
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA-WATCHER
AFRICOM AND CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/09/10

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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI/SOMALIA: TFG PRESIDENT SHARIF REVIEWS SECURITY
ISSUES

REF: 09 DJIBOUTI 1089; 09 DJIBOUTI 951; 09 NAIROBI 1641
09 NAIROBI 1860

CLASSIFIED BY: Eric Wong, DCM, U.S. Department of State, U.S.
Embassy, Djibouti; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, President of Somalia's Transitional Federal government (TFG), expressed appreciation for U.S. support for Somalia, and made an explicit urgent appeal for additional security assistance to the TFG, including equipment and weapons. He outlined the goals of a smaller, more effective, well-equipped multi-clan Somali military, and requested that the USG help in this effort. Expressing concern that al-Shabaab and Hizb al-Islam are targeting Somalia's central regions, he confirmed ongoing TFG military planning with Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) to "pre-empt" al-Shabaab and Hizb al-Islam, but also stressed the need for inclusive political administration in the area. While continuing contacts with Qatar to "make it a friend," Sharif said its efforts at outreach to al-Shabaab and Hizb al-Islam would fail; he said he had not sent the planned technical team to Doha to follow up on his earlier political level contacts there. Sharif's staff reported that he would return to Mogadishu September 10. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Ambassador, Embassy Nairobi Somalia Unit TDY officer, and DCM met with President Sheikh Sharif late in the evening of September 9. Sharif had just concluded meetings with other GODJ principals, including President Ismail Omar Guelleh, Guelleh's Secretary-General (former chief of staff) Ismail Tani, and Minister for Islamic Affairs Hamoud Abdi Soultan. Sharif was accompanied by Somali DCM in Djibouti Abdirahman Mohamed Hirabe, Deputy Prime Minister for Finance Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Hassan, and other TFG officials (including interpreter).

¶3. (U) NOTE. According to Djiboutian state-run media, President Sharif arrived on September 9 for a 24-hour visit to Djibouti, accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Fishing and

Marine Resources Abdourahman Aden Ibrahim, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Hassan, the Minister of Tourism, and the Minister of Science and Technology. END NOTE.

APPRECIATION FOR U.S. SUPPORT

14. (C) President Sharif expressed appreciation for support from the United States and the United Nations, and for the role the USG was playing in Somalia. He welcomed frequent opportunities for exchange with USG representatives. As the situation on the ground in Somalia was a difficult one, the solution would also likely be "difficult"; the United States had a central role to play in helping solve the Somalia "problem." The TFG had been handicapped by "starting from zero" when he was elected in January, lacking any strong institutions to inherit; now, months later, sufficient time had elapsed to assess results of the current administration. At the beginning, Sharif said, opposition groups had sought to overthrow the TFG; now, they sought only to prove they still existed.

ESSENTIAL STEP IS BUILDING NATIONAL SECURITY FORCE

15. (C) In view of ongoing training of Somali forces in Djibouti, Ambassador asked about TFG plans to sustain and integrate them when they returned to Somalia. Sharif explained that a key priority for Somalia was establishing a national security force--with capable officers loyal to Somalia's government, and with sufficient funding for its sustainment. The USG, by providing modest in-kind assistance to Djiboutian efforts to train TFG recruits (refs B-C), had made a helpful contribution toward building such a national security force for Somalia. Officers for this force would be selected, Sharif said, from Somali veterans with prior military experience. While there was also a need to train new officers, limited resources were a constraint. Existing troops in cantonment camps also needed to be managed properly.

16. (C) Sharif said that he and TFG Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke had, for several weeks, been examining ways of streamlining the security forces, perhaps by establishing maximum quotas for individual regions. The objective was loyal, capable, security forces--comprising both military and police units. Citing the need for disarmament of the general populace, Sharif said preparations were underway (including discussions with AMISOM) for the TFG to implement more urban operations in Mogadishu.

APPEAL FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE FOR SECURITY FORCES

17. (C) President Sharif underscored the need for assistance from the United States to provide equipment, uniforms, food, wages, and other support to TFG security forces for their sustainment.

He also highlighted the need for weapons, noting that the TFG

understood the importance of accountability; former Somali officers (drawn from those returning from the diaspora) would control the release of such weapon stocks, he said. Finally, he noted the need for hospitalization and medical care for casualties, citing the specific example of mobile clinics used successfully in Iraq.

18. (C) By fully equipping TFG forces trained by the French and Djiboutians, and providing them with proper leadership and funding, such forces could serve as "the starting point" of a well-disciplined Somali army, Sharif said. He added that Djiboutian officials had proposed conducting one-to-two weeks of combined training for both the 463 Djiboutian-trained TFG forces and the approximately 150 French-trained forces (as both were due to complete training in Djibouti before the end of this month); however, details of such combined training had yet to be established.

MILITARY PLANNING WITH ASWJ CONTINUING

19. (C) In response to Ambassador's inquiries, Sharif provided the following observation regarding the internal security situation:

-- Sharif said he shared concerns about al-Shabaab strength in Hiran Region. The number of TFG troops at Beled Weyne had been sufficient, but weapons were limited and the local administration

was "weak." The defection of Beled Weyne's governor highlighted the need for an "all-inclusive" administration there.

-- Sharif said al-Shabaab and Hisb al-Islam appear to be focused on Somalia's central regions, and that a quick response was needed "to pre-empt them." He acknowledged ongoing military planning with Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ), which he said he hoped would continue. Sharif said he was considering dispatching Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke and Minister of Security Abdullahi Muhamed Ali to engage those in the central regions. Sharif assessed that Hizb al-Islam members were more likely to defect to al-Shabaab, rather than support a merger of the organizations.

-- Qatar, which Sharif had recently visited, believed that it could initiate peace talks with al-Shabaab and Hizb al-Islam, "but we are sure they will fail." Sharif said he had not/not yet sent the planned technical team to Qatar to follow up on his political level contacts last month (ref D).

WILL REVIEW DATES OF TRAVEL TO UNGA

110. (SBU) Ambassador urged Sharif to travel to New York to attend the POTUS lunch for African heads of state on September 22 and the International Somalia Contact Group meeting on September 23. Sharif made no commitments, but said he would review his program, including planned travel to Saudi Arabia at that time, to determine

his priorities.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) President Sharif's visit to Djibouti, where he was inaugurated in January 2009 following extensive "Djibouti Process" reconciliation talks, shows his continued close ties to the Djiboutian leadership. (The night of his arrival, he was scheduled for a four-hour dinner with President Guelleh.) His visit also precedes by just days plans for return of some 600 TFG trainees from Djibouti to Mogadishu. While he urgently appealed for additional security assistance, he also clearly registered that the TFG needs to accelerate its own preparations for sustainment of the forces that will soon return home. His comments on al-Shabaab threats in the Somalia's central region suggest he envisions both a military and political strategy in response. END COMMENT.
SWAN